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ABSTRACT

MAINTAINING THAT FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMS HAVE IMPROVED SUBSTANTIALLY IN THE LAST TWO DECADES, THE AUTHOR COMMENTS ON THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS AND STUDY PROGRAMS. ALSO OFFERED IS A LIST OF 27 TOPICS WHICH SHOULD BE COVERED IN METHODS COURSES. SOME DISCUSSION OF DEGREE PROGRAMS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDY IS INCLUDED. (RL)

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THE PREPARATION OF LANGUAGE TEACHERS

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Originally, I had planned to talk about some of the important aspects of the methods of teaching German. However, negative statements have been made recently by people in the profession about the University's foreign language teachers training program and the profession as a whole. At several meetings and conferences which I have attended during the last few months, it was stated that the foreign language profession has neglected to take over responsibilities in regard to the training of our teachers and it has been said that the universities are producing teachers now who are as poorly prepared as they were ten years ago. I feel I owe it to the profession that I say something about the efforts made by the various institutions and organizations for the improvement of this situation during the past years. I will make an attempt to outline to you a foreign language teachers training program which will prove to you that considerable improvements have been made. I believe that some of the critics are still thinking of the time when they went to the university, which was perhaps twenty years ago. I would like to point out that particularly in the training of foreign language teachers, we have come a long way and that these people would be surprised about the changes which have taken place during the past ten years.

I admit that perhaps not everything is perfect and that more improvements are needed, but I must object to the statement that the entire profession has failed to recognize the need for an improved foreign language teachers training program and has refused to take over the responsibilities as other academic disciplines have done. Being involved for about ten years in the training of teachers of German, I can assure you that many foreign language departments have been very much concerned about the training of well-qualified teachers of foreign languages and have devoted most of their efforts to improving the existing programs and have introduced many changes and even completely new programs in foreign language education.

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I would also like to point out that the MLA and the newly formed organization ACTFL have worked especially hard during the past years to establish new guidelines for foreign language teacher education programs. As a matter of fact, ACTFL was created mainly for the purpose of giving more emphasis to the improvement of teachers training programs. Also, the newly formed American Council on the Study of German has as its main goal to assist and help teachers training institutions in developing better programs for the training of teachersof German. Under the auspices of this Council, the Teachers Aid Program known as TAP V has established an overseas study program for prospective teachers of German. This is certainly a move in the right direction and will have a tremendous impact on our profession. These are only a few of the many efforts made during the past ten years,

but it is up to every individual institution to make use of and accept the established opportunities as well as to make every effort to integrate the new developments into the existing programs.

After this short introduction, I would like now to come to the actual purpose of my presentation and present to you an outline for an improved foreign language teachers training program. First of all, let me say that the entire training program should be a cooperative effort between the College of Education, the Department of Foreign Languages, and the public schools. As long as we don't have the full agreement of these three agencies, we shall fail to establish a satisfactory training program. Each one involved in the training of foreign language teachers plays an important role in the entire program and everyone should fully understand the other's function. At the present time, most of the programs are divided into three parts: one, the educational training; two, the training in the subject matter; and three, the practice teaching. It is essential that the educational part of the training program be entirely foreign language-oriented and that in courses such as methods, psychology of learning, curriculum, etc., the foreign language majors are taught in separate classes and not be mixed with students from other subject areas. The methods courses should be taught by a specialist in teaching foreign languages and be given by the respective language department. If a high degree of coordination between the College of Education and the foreign language department is to be achieved, it is essential that the College of Education have a specialist in foreign language education on its faculty. This will assure us in the foreign language profession of the proper representation of our interests in the College of Education. To my knowledge, this position exists for other subject areas -- why should we be deprived of it? I always admire the way the University of Texas has solved this problem: they have established a center for foreign language education which is a joint institute of both the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Education.

After this brief information about the basic organization of a teachers training program, I should like to devote a few words to the study program. At the present time, most of our teaching majors in German are together in courses with the majors in German who are studying German for more intellectual or academic reasons. The latter normally has no interest in teaching and the entire study program is, in general, very literarily oriented. In order to satisfy the needs of the two different groups, my suggestion is that the two groups should be taught in separate classes whenever possible. This separation could start at the beginning of the third-year level. During the third and fourth years of study, it is very important that a prospective teacher of foreign languages 1) work with the four language skills along with the study of the foreign language literature until he graduates. This will assure a proper preparation in teaching the conversation and composition skill which is taught mainly by the beginning teachers on any level. Ideally, these advanced language classes should be at the same time a demonstration of the newest and most correct teaching methods -- that means that these classes can only be taught by a specialist in language teaching. 2) Great emphasis should also be given to the study of the foreign culture. 3) The study of literature should deal mainly with modern and contemporary authors. 4) The older period could be covered in a general survey course. 5) Gen-

eral, and particularly, applied linguistics, should play an important part in the study program. 6) There is also a great need for a phonetic course in order to make teachers aware of the problems in the pronunciation of a foreign language, thus giving him the necessary information and skills to become an effective classroom teacher. 7) Very few training programs at the present time include a special course in the psychology of learning foreign languages. This seems to be a great lack and every effort should be made to include such a course. 8) In order to become an effective foreign language teacher, it is essential that a student have the opportunity to study at least one quarter abroad before he starts teaching. Fortunately, more and more opportunities have been made available to our students and it is hoped that this important feature might be made a requirement. As I mentioned before, TAP V is an excellent opportunity. This program is financed partly by the Volkswagen Foundation and will make it rather easy for a student to study in Germany. The Goethe Institute offers special classes for teachers of German. Here again, financial assistance is possible. Also, many universities have their own study abroad programs, but it is very important to make sure that these overseas programs are designed mainly for the needs of a foreign language teacher and not only for an academic major in foreign languages. 9) There should be a special methods course included in the training program. This course should be given by the respective foreign language department. Since this course is one of the most important features of the entire program I would like to give you breifly some of the most significant topics to be discussed in such a class.

1. General History and Development of Foreign-Language Teaching.

2. Language Programs and Materials Today.

3. Course of Study for German I through VI (Objectives for each level)

*4. Articulation and Correltation of Foreign Language Programs.

5. Suggestions for Teaching German during the First Days of Beginning German.

*6. The Method of Pre-Reading Instruction (Working on Pre-Reading Units).

*7. The Audio-Lingual Method.

8. The teaching of a Dialogue.

*9. Pattern Drills.

10. Listening-Comprehension Exercises.

11. Characteristics of Good Drills.

12. The Making of Tape Materials.

13. Selection of Texts and Laboratory Materials.

*14. The Language Laboratory (Purpose, Use, Planning, and Types).

15. The Use of the Tape Recorder.

16. The Use of Foreign-Language Films.

17. Audio-Visual Materials.

18. Teaching of a Chapter from a Textbook.

19. Teaching of a Reading.

*20. Teaching of Writing.

21. Enrichment of the German Program.

*22. Teaching of Literature.

*23. Teaching of Culture.

24. Discussing and Evaluating Teaching Materials Used Today.

25. Testing (Various Types of Tests).

26. Ideas for Practice Teaching.

27. Use of Native Informants.

* The starred topics are given more time than the others.

A prospective teacher should also be exposed at a much earlier stage to the actual classroom situation. The one quarter of practice teaching, in my opinion, is not sufficient in order to prepare him properly for his work as a fulltime teacher. A much longer period of contact with classroom activities which one can call an "internship" is needed. If this is not possible, a prospective teacher should have at least the opportunity to work with a well-qaulified experienced classroom teacher for a considerable length of time. You may have noticed that I have stated a "well-qualified" teacher. I believe very strongly that this is one of the existing weaknesses in the entire training program. We do not have enough properly trained cooperating or supervising teachers who are working with the prospective teachers. It is believed that a cooperating or supervising teacher should be chosen very carefully, jointly by the College of Education and the respective language departments and the public schools. It is also believed that a cooperating teacher should receive special training for this important and difficult task. Colleges of education should be encouraged to introduce special courses which will deal mainly with the training of the supervising teacher and perhaps should deal with the problems of a beginning teacher. This need has been recognized by many people in the profession and I hope something will be done about it in the near future.

Time does not allow me to go into more detail, but I hope that I have been able to demonstrate to you some of the new ideas and new develop-

ments as well as to identify some of the existing problems. Perhaps during the following discussion, we will be able to discuss in more detail some of the points presented.

In conclusion, let me say that the training of a foreign language teacher should not end with the granting of the teaching certificate. The training should continue throughout his entire professional career. Particularly the beginning teacher needs more special attention. I wish he would not have to take on a full teaching load during the first year of his teaching -- perhaps three periods a day would be sufficient so the rest of the time he would be able to work with a qualified teacher in planning, preparing, and evaluating his own teaching. This is one place where the school district could take on more responsibility and work together more closely with the College of Education and the foreign language departments.

In order to encourage teachers for advanced study and to make the continued training more attractive, the universities should introduce advanced degree programs which not only concern themselves with the study of the foreign literature, but also with the pedagogical aspects of foreign language teaching. I am happy to say that several institutions of higher learning in this country have recognized this need and are in the process of developing such programs. The Department of German at the University of Washington has introduced such a program for teachers of German leading to the M.A. and the Ph.D. degrees. This program is offered during the summers as well as during the academic year. It is not only designed to improve the qualifications of secondary school teachers, but in particular, to train people for leadership in our profession and also well-qualified community college or college teachers of German. There is such a great need for a training program of college language instructors. It is finally recognized by the universities that we do not need only research-oriented people in our profession, but also well-qualified teachers on the college level. I realize that much more needs to be done in establishing valuable programs for the continued education and training of foreign language teachers for all levels. I am happy to report to you that this particular problem is under very serious discussion by professional organizations and people in the profession and I can say that we can look forward to many changes which will contribute greatly to the upgrading of the foreign language profession. If we will be able to reach our goals and objectives in providing a better training program for teachers of foreign languages, we will then receive the proper recognition in the teaching profession.